

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Title: Lead Economic Assistance Benefits Specialist

Class Code: 51583

A. Purpose:

Serves as a lead worker and expert resource in an assigned unit by providing training, daily advice and guidance, and assistance in case development to Economic Assistance Benefits Specialists; and manages a case load by providing assistance and services to low income individuals and their families; determining eligibility for multiple social service programs; responding to public inquiries regarding programs and benefits; and interpreting rules, regulations, and policies to ensure appropriate benefits and services are provided in an effective and expedient manner.

B. Distinguishing Feature:

The Lead Economic Assistance Benefits Specialist assists the supervisor of an assigned unit by providing expert advice and training to Economic Assistance Benefits Specialists, and is responsible for an assigned case load.

The Economic Assistance Benefits Specialist Supervisor manages a work unit in a large county or multi-county area; is responsible for the delivery of services within the service area; and supervises staff assigned to the unit.

The Economic Assistance Benefits Specialist is responsible for an assigned case load within Economic Assistance.

C. Functions:

(These are examples only; any one position may not include all of the listed examples nor do the listed examples include all functions which may be found in positions of this class.)

1. Provides daily work direction, expert advice, and training to Economic Assistance Benefits Specialists to ensure accurate and effective delivery of services.
 - a. Interprets multiple programs' requirements to answer team members' questions and assist them with case development.
 - b. Apprises the unit supervisor of employees' work progress and challenges that may require attention.
 - c. Assists others to apply what they have read and learned in real life situations.
2. Assesses and analyzes current life circumstances and financial capabilities to provide assistance to low income individuals and their families.
 - a. Interviews applicants, assesses and identifies specific family needs, and determines if applicants may be eligible for multiple state and federal programs or for referral to other programs.
 - b. Provides information to individuals regarding benefits and services provided by the department including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps, numerous medical programs, Low Income Energy Assistant Program (LIEAP), and child care services.
 - c. Counsels and assists individuals in developing realistic and achievable goals and removing barriers to self-sufficiency.
 - d. Determines, based on actions observed and information obtained during interviews, the need for referral to child protection or adult services in cases of possible child or adult abuse and neglect.

3. Determines eligibility and authorizes state and federal program expenditures for TANF, Food Stamps, and all medical programs.
 - a. Completes or assists with completion of various program forms and applications and outside agency forms.
 - b. Gathers relevant information from numerous data systems and collateral contacts to collect and verify relevant asset information.
 - c. Reviews documentation for accuracy, completeness, and relevance.
 - d. Evaluates household circumstances such as household income, assets, household composition, and medical information to make a final eligibility determination.
 - e. Informs clients of their rights and responsibilities for each program for which they are eligible.
 - f. Determines the need for and applies penalties based on household circumstances.
 - g. Notifies households of eligibility decisions within timeframes established for each program.
 - h. Maintains case files and computer database systems for assigned cases.
 - i. Monitors ongoing cases to ensure appropriate eligibility status for current benefits and re-evaluates eligibility for various benefits if circumstances change.
 - j. Determines the need for and assigns protective payees for TANF clients based on documented misuse of TANF funds.
 - k. Gathers documentation when recipients appeal negative actions, and prepares and presents testimony at fair hearings to defend actions.
4. Identifies community resources, provides information, makes referrals, and/or obtains services available from outside agencies to ensure all clients' needs are met.
 - a. Makes critical assessments to identify barriers to self-sufficiency and makes referrals to other community resources to assist in removing those barriers.
 - b. Provides short-term crisis intervention through counseling, the use of community resources, or other service providers and agencies.
 - c. Assists and advises clients in interpreting and understanding correspondence, forms, and information received from other agencies and resources.
5. Responds to public inquiries and speaks to organizations or individuals to explain various benefits and services provided by the department, and procedures for obtaining services and benefits.
6. Examines and analyzes case record information to ensure compliance with program rules.
 - a. Examines case records, reports, and computer systems for inaccuracies or fraudulent actions of clients.
 - b. Completes corrective actions based on reviews completed by quality assurance or supervisory findings.
 - c. Determines the cause of errors and computes accurate amounts of benefits.
 - d. Contacts clients and makes collateral contacts to reconcile discrepancies.
 - e. Completes overpayment referrals by determining whether benefits were paid incorrectly due to inadvertent household error, suspected program violation, or agency error.
 - f. Gathers and reviews documentation regarding suspected fraud, makes a determination that fraud has occurred, recommends appropriate action, and represents the department at administrative hearings to substantiate claims of suspected program violations and/or fraud.
7. Performs other work as assigned.

D. Reporting Relationships:

Reports to an Economic Assistance Benefits Specialist Supervisor. Does not supervise but provides daily work direction to Economic Assistance Benefits Specialists.

E. Challenges and Problems:

Challenged to provide accurate and effective guidance and advice daily to team members. This is difficult because there are multiple social service programs involved and each program has its own laws, rules, and procedures which must be interpreted and implemented consistently while considering the individuality of each case; team members have varying levels of work experience so information must be tempered to match skill levels; it requires the incumbent in this position to have a thorough understanding of each program and its purpose; and the incumbent must be able to manage a case load while assisting coworkers.

Problems resolved include addressing and effectively alleviating customer concerns, and maintaining accuracy in determining eligibility and benefits.

F. Decision-making Authority:

Decisions include how to most effectively assist team members and whether to refer them to higher authority, recommendations for staff training, whether or not case files are correct and complete, whether clients are entitled to additional benefits through other programs, whether overpayments or underpayments have occurred, whether clients' benefits levels should be changed, when to refer clients to other agencies, and recommendations for changes in procedures.

Decisions referred include policy and process development and definition, interpretation of unclear or conflicting policy issues, what action to take on overpayments, and clarification of medical and incapacity factors that may impact clients' eligibility.

G. Contact with Others:

Daily contact with clients, employers, South Dakota Career Centers, landlords, attorneys, schools, colleges, the South Dakota Housing Authority, Social Security Administration, banks, and community resources. Occasional contact with other department professionals, public and private agencies, and the courts.

H. Working Conditions:

Works in a typical office environment. May work with irate, indifferent, and hostile clients who may present threats of physical harm.

I. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- various social, cultural, economic, psychological and emotional factors influencing the behavior and attitudes of families and individuals;
- principles, practices and methods of social programs;
- basic mathematical calculation methods.

Ability to:

- prepare clear and concise documentation, reports, and correspondence that reflect relevant facts;
- demonstrate compassion, respect, courtesy, and tact when interacting with others;

- gather and analyze data, reason logically and accurately, and solve problems using common sense, reasoning and resourcefulness;
- actively listen, elicit needed information, and communicate information effectively and accurately;
- plan and organize work to meet schedules and deadlines and respond and adjust to multiple demands;
- utilize computerized data systems;
- assume initiative with minimal supervision;
- provide training and work direction to others.